

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 31, 2018

George Sigounas, MS, Ph.D.
Administrator
Health Resources and Services Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Administrator Sigounas:

As the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) considers applications for the Healthy Start Initiative (Notice of Funding Opportunity HRSA-19-049), we write to draw your attention to the success of Ohio's existing Healthy Start programs. Ohio's five current initiatives have helped to reduce the state's overall infant mortality rate while addressing many of the social determinants of health that adversely affect the women and children of Ohio.

According to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report from earlier this year, Ohio had the 10th highest rate in the country in 2015 for infant deaths. The CDC's data also illustrated the wide racial disparities in birth outcomes, showing that for babies in Ohio born to black mothers, Ohio had the 2nd highest rate in the country. In fact, black babies are over twice more likely to die before their first birthday than white babies. Ohio's five Healthy Start programs operate in communities with the highest infant mortality rates—Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Cincinnati, and Toledo—and are helping address those disparities locally as well as maximizing resources and expertise to benefit the state as a whole.

These programs have become a trusted resource in their communities, providing critically-needed services to highly-vulnerable families. These programs share the goals of improving health outcomes before, during, and after pregnancy; reducing racial and ethnic disparities in women's health and family wellness; and ensuring their practices are built to last. As detailed in their applications, renewed funding will enable each program to serve no fewer than 700 program participants per year, including 300 pregnant women and 300 infants and children, along with 100 fathers and male partners. These local initiatives are dedicated to high-quality care, as evidenced by their commitment to reporting on the 19 Healthy Start Benchmarks. In fact, Ohio's programs have taken this commitment a step further by including a local evaluation component. With renewed support, Ohio's Healthy Start programs can continue to reduce infant mortality in the state's most vulnerable populations.

We have the utmost confidence in the continued success of Ohio's five Healthy Start programs, and urge you to give these funding renewal applications full and fair considerations. We ask that you keep our offices informed of the status of these applications.



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Sincerely,



Rob Portman
United States Senator

CC: Michael Warren, MD, MPH, FAAP; Associate Administrator, Maternal and Child Health Bureau
Benita Baker, MS; Chief, West Branch, Division of Healthy Start and Perinatal Services
David de la Cruz, Ph.D., MPH; Acting Director, Division of Healthy Start and Perinatal Services